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The Biblical Doctrine of Holiness

ROBINSON

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF HOLINESS

BY

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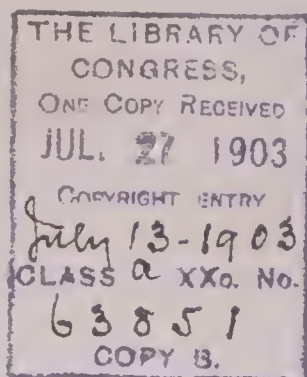


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THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF HOLINESS.

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A STUDY of the doctrine of holiness, as taught in sacred Scripture, should not fail to profit because holiness is so conspicuously the moral and spiritual ideal of both Old Testament and New. Through the inspired lawgiver the ancient Hebrews were commanded: "Ye shall be holy, for I, Jehovah your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2); and centuries later the New Testament apostle also exhorts the Hebrews to "follow after holiness" (literally "the sanctification"), without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14); while Paul, commending the Thessalonians, encourages them likewise to love one another to the end that their hearts may be established "unblamable in holiness" (1 Thess. 3:13; cf. 1 Pet. 1:16). Thus in both Old Testament and New, holiness is man's religious ideal.

1. *Its etymology and significance among the early Semites.*—The genesis of the idea of "holiness" is wrapped in obscurity. It emerges from very antique associations and has had a long and com-

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plicated history. The primitive concept probably possessed only a secular meaning; this was superseded by a religious, and this, in turn, by an ethical. There is abundance of evidence that a common Semitic word, קדש, has been taken up and purified by revelation. The root is used in nearly all of the Semitic dialects, including Hebrew, Phœnician, Arabic, Aramaic, Ethiopic, and Assyrian.¹ In Hebrew the noun קִדְּשׁ, "holiness," the adjective קָדוֹשׁ, "holy," and the denominative verb קָדַשׁ, "to hallow," occur with very great frequency.²

Its original meaning having been lost, we can only conjecture what it may have been. On the one hand, Dillmann has suggested that, etomologically, it is related to the Arabic and Ethiopic קדא or קדר, signifying "to be bright," reminding one also of the Assyrian *kuddušū*, "brilliant," and of the Hebrew חֲדָשׁ, "to be new." If Dillmann's conjecture be correct, then a positive idea lies at the base of its derived meaning, namely, that of "brilliancy."³ But most authorities prefer the derivation of Fleischer, Delitzsch, and von Baudissin,

¹ As a proper name, *Kidši*, it is found in the Tell el-Amarna tablets.

² The verb-stem is used in all of the different so-called *species*, except the Pual and Hophal.

³ Likewise KITTEL in *Realencyclopaedia*, art. "Heiligkeit Gottes im Alten Testament."

who connect it with the unused Hebrew stem קָדַד, meaning "to cut off," hence something "cut off," "set apart," or "separated." This etymology, though negative in sense, is so much more consistent with the uses made of it in the Old Testament that it carries the weight of probability on its side. Its primary significance seems to have been that of "separation," "restriction," "distance," "withdrawal," "unapproachableness."

For example, the Nazarite is described, in Numbers 6:8, as "holy unto Jehovah during all the days of his separation." To Ahimelech, the priest at Nob, David and his soldiers are declared to be holy because of their abstemious (sexual) life during the three preceding days (1 Sam. 21:5). Even a woman who separated herself from others and practiced harlotry in the name of religion at the shrines of the Canaanites was called a קִדְּשָׁה, or "sacred prostitute," not, of course, in virtue of her character, but in virtue rather of her separation and consecration to the lustful practices of a corrupt religion (*cf.* Gen. 38:21, 22; Deut. 23:17, 18; Hos. 4:14).⁴ In Lev. 10:10 קִדְּשׁ stands in antith-

⁴Compare the "sacred slave girls" at Corinth, mentioned by STRABO (VIII, 378; XVL, i, 20); the *hierodouloi* in Babylon spoken of by HERODOTUS (I, 199); and the Mohammedan rites practiced today in the name of Islam at Tanta in the delta of Egypt.

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esis to **הֹל**, as **טָמֵא** does to **טָהוֹר**: "That ye may make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean." That is, holiness is opposed to whatever is "common" or "profane," and "open" for use to anybody without restriction and without fear of supernatural penalties (*cf.* 1 Sam. 21:5; Ezek. 22:26; 42:20).

At the same time, holiness, in primitive times, was also conceived of as something contagious, as a quality which could be transmitted by contact. "Whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy" (Exod. 29:37, *cf.* 30:29; Lev. 6:27; Isa. 65:5; Ezek. 44:19, 46:20). This conception lived on in post-biblical Judaism, and seems to have formed the basis of the early Jewish idea of "canonicity." For example, to the common people, who believed that holiness was contagious, and, therefore, if they could but touch the edge of a sacred roll of Scripture they would receive divine benefit (as did the woman of Capernaum, who pressed through the crowd to touch the hem of Christ's garment—Matt. 9:21), the Jewish rabbis, in their characteristic way and by an anachronism of thought, in order to preserve the sacred rolls of the Old Testament from contamination, taught that, instead of conveying holiness, the sacred parchments "defiled the hands;" and this was the beginning of

what we are wont to call "canonicity," a word which, as is generally known, Athanasius employed in this sense for the first time in his Festal Epistles, 365 A. D. Another idea similar to this, but even more curious, as an example of the extraordinary conceptions of holiness which were entertained by the early Semites, is the command in Deuteronomy not to "sow a vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole fruit become holy, the seed which thou hast sown and the increase of the vineyard" (22:9; *cf.* Lev. 19:19). Here the idea is that of forfeiture though defilement.

In very ancient times, also, holiness was closely associated with and akin to "taboo," the underlying notion of which is that certain things are no longer safe for ordinary use. For example, clothes worn by the Bedouin when making the sacred circuit of the *kaaba* at Mecca, in heathen times, became "taboo" because of that sacred function, and could neither be worn nor sold, but left at the gate of the sanctuary (*cf.* 1 Sam. 19:24; 2 Sam. 6:14; 2 Kings 10:22).⁵ It has further been discovered that among savages and primitive peoples everywhere a wide difference is always placed between what is divine and what is human. Everything divine is holy. The imagined presence of Deity in a place renders it holy. Hence, particular

⁵ *Cf.* ROBERTSON SMITH, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 446 ff.

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places and things were said to be consecrated to Deity. In Lev. 27:28 we read that "every devoted thing was most holy unto Jehovah." The Hebrew expression for "devoted thing" here is **הֶרֶם** (*herem*), a word closely akin to **קֹדֶשׁ**, and one which we have taken over, through the Arabic, into our own language, and which signifies that portion of an oriental's house set apart and devoted exclusively to the women. Everything "consecrated" was holy; especially everything consecrated to Deity. That is to say to the early Semite holiness was a concept, not of material, but of relation. Persons, places, seasons, and things were holy, not because of their qualities *per se*, but because of their *relation to Deity*. "To hallow" signified primarily to dedicate to religious uses, that is, to make a thing God's property. Elisha is called a "holy man of God," not so much on account of his saintliness of character as on account of his near relation to God (2 Kings 4:9). Not only so, but when once a place or a thing was consecrated to Deity, it must remain consecrated. Thus even the censers of Korah and his company, which were holy because they had offered them before Jehovah, but which had become desecrated and were no longer fit for use as censers because strange incense had been offered in them, were nevertheless not to be thrown away,

but beaten into plates for a covering of the holy altar (Numb. 16:36-40); for once holy, always holy, because of their relation to Jehovah.

To the early Semite, however, holiness was devoid of all moral significance. The fact that the "sacred prostitutes" of the Canaanites are spoken of as קִדְּשׁוֹת, or "holy women," and that "Sodomites" are called קִדְּשִׁים, or "holy men," in Deut. 23:17, 18, furnishes decisive evidence of the complete divorce among the early Semites of holiness and morality. Even when applied to Diety, the term has no ethical significance. For example, when Eshmunazar, king of Sidon, speaks in his funereal inscription (lines 9, 22) of the "holy gods," אֱלֹהִים קִדְּשִׁים, he does not employ the term "holy" in an ethical sense. It is rather a mere "otiose epithet," or redundancy of speech, synonymous with divinity in general, and meaning probably no more than the simple expression "the gods" (*cf.* Dan. 4:8, 9, 18; 5:11).⁶ Diety was universally conceived of in antique times as an object of terror. Listen to the men of Beth-shemesh, whose comrades Jehovah had smitten with great slaughter because they had looked into the ark of the covenant, as they exclaim: "Who is able to stand before Jehovah this holy God" (1 Sam.

⁶ *Cf.* A. B. DAVIDSON, "Ezekiel," *Cambridge Bible*, p. xxxix.

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6:20)? Even to the modern Semite holiness is not everywhere a necessary attribute of Diety. The Mohammedan takes God's name in vain, swears falsely by him, and thinks of him in the most shameful connections.⁷ The consequence is that modern orientals have very deficient ideas of sin. They think of it only as misfortune. When a man prospers he is considered righteous; when he suffers, or is afflicted, like Job, he is a sinner; that is, he is unfortunate. And so it was in primitive times. It was not until men came to think of God as holy that they had any appreciable conception of the heinousness of sin. The ancient Egyptians were never known to confess sin. On the contrary, the language of the dead before the judge in the spirit world is universally that of self-justification: "I am pure. I am pure. I am pure." A fuller appreciation of God's holiness was necessary to sharpen men's minds and make them conscious of sin. How this was brought about we shall see as we proceed.

2. *In the Torah.*—In discussing the development of this idea out of the non-ethical into the moral and spiritual, I shall begin with the doctrine as found in the Torah, or first division of the

⁷ Cf. CURTIS, *Primitive Semitic Religion Today*, p. 66; DOUGHTY, *Arabia Deserta*, Vol. I, p. 266; LANE, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, pp. 286, 287.

Canon, and, subsequently, as taught in the Prophets. I am quite aware that this is the reverse of the order usually pursued, but the reason is not far to seek. "In the Torah," as one has well said, "the idea of divine holiness is built upon the broad foundations of God's exalted and transcendent unapproachableness—the true prototype, not alone of the ethical, but also of the external and ritualistic; whereas, in the Prophets, God is treated as the outward manifestation of the spiritual being known as Jehovah." To reverse the order would necessitate the supposition that the doctrine developed suddenly from a notion which was non-ethical into the ethical and highly spiritual conception of the prophets; and that, subsequently, it degenerated into the ethico-ritualistic system of the prophetic and priestly historians. Such a thing is not only *a priori* unnatural and improbable, but the facts themselves witness against it. The post-exilic psalms are of quite a different tenor from the Law, and yet *ex hypothesi* both sprang from the same general period; while Zech. 14 would in that case spiritualize the doctrine in the face of a stern legalism. Furthermore, it would be still more difficult to account for the many primitive Semitic conceptions (some of which we have already discussed) which still cling like cast-off vestments to the Law, whereas, in the Prophets,

these were well-nigh totally discarded. The truer order of development, accordingly, seems rather to have been, first, as we have seen, a holiness which is wholly non-ethical, as among the early Semites; next, a holiness which was both ritual and moral, as taught in the Torah; third, a holiness in the main moral and spiritual, as found in the Prophets, while eventually, as a principle, it finally becomes incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ. Let us now attempt to trace this order of development a little more closely.

In the history of Israel the idea of holiness comes suddenly into prominence at the time of the exodus. With the exception of one passage (*cf.* Gen. 2:3), which received its present literary form at the earliest in the time of Moses, the concept is not to be found in the book of Genesis. In the remaining four books of the Pentateuch, on the contrary, the root occurs not less than 275 times, causing holiness to stand out as one of the cardinal doctrines of the Mosaic covenant. It is variously employed, being applied not only as an attribute to Israel's God, but as a quality also of persons, seasons, and things standing in relation to Israel's God.

One of the most instructive passages to be noted is that contained in Exod. 3:5, in which Jehovah commands Moses out of the glowing bush:

“Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” The purpose of this theophany is obvious: Jehovah intended thereby to teach Moses that the ground round about that bush stood in special relation to him, that it was his, and that no one could tread upon it without his permission (*cf.* Deut. 33:2; Judg. 5:4,5; Hab. 3:3). This was Israel’s first lesson in holiness.

Later in Egypt, they are given another object-lesson. Moses is instructed to call a “holy convocation” (Exod. 12:16) and observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, after which he should sanctify to Jehovah, as his own peculiar people, all the firstborn whom He had saved from the power of the destroying angel. This Moses does and leads them on to freedom. Israel is victoriously delivered at the Red Sea; whereupon Moses sings of Jehovah’s matchless majesty and ethical might: “Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the Gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders” (Exod. 15:11; *cf.* 1 Sam. 2:2)? Israel had been wonderfully redeemed. Subsequently, at Sinai, Jehovah proclaims his purpose of sanctifying not only the firstborn, but the whole nation, unto himself as “a kingdom of priests and a holy people” (Exod. 19:6). This passage reveals the close relation

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which Israel sustained to Jehovah ; it also implies that in return for deliverance from slavery they owed him certain duties.

During the months which followed, the foundations, at least, of a ritual were laid, the sanctity of which is most graphically set forth in a group of passages contained in the latter half of the book of Exodus. Certain places, persons, seasons, and things are formally set apart and consecrated as holy. First of all, a sacred sanctuary is constructed as the residence of Jehovah, the most holy God of Israel. This is divided into two compartments, one a holy place, the other a holy of holies (Exod. 26:33). Aaron and his sons are consecrated to to the holy office of the priesthood, and holy garments are prepared for them (Exod. 28:2,4; 29:29); a holy plate inscribed "holy to Jehovah" (28:36) is placed as a crown upon the high-priest's miter (29:6); the seventh day, to be known as a sabbath of sabbaths, is dedicated holy unto Jehovah (35:2); holy gifts are commanded (28:38); holy incense (30:35-37) and holy anointing oil (30:25) are specified as necessary accompaniments of worship ; while all their sacrifices must be offered upon the holy altar (29:37). Only by steadfastly performing every detail of Jehovah's prescribed ritual could rebellious Israel expect acceptance in the sight of an angry God.

And yet the need of ritual was due, not to Jehovah's wrath, but rather to his holiness ; for it was violated holiness which required expiation.

By far the most instructive passages, however, in the Torah concerning holiness are those which occur so frequently in the book of Leviticus, especially in chaps. 17-26, which are technically known as the "Laws of Holiness." Here are some of the most characteristic of them : "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy; for I am Jehovah your God" (20:7). "And ye shall be holy unto me ; for I Jehovah am holy and have set you apart from the peoples that ye should be mine" (20:26). "And ye shall not profane my holy name : but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am Jehovah who halloweth you" (22:32)—priests and people alike (21:6f; 19:2 ; *cf.* *Exod.* 22:31). In fact, the Levitical commands are comprehensively summed up in the one significant and oft-repeated dictum : "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy" (19:2). This brief sentence contains one of the most marvelous teachings in the entire Old Testament. It finds its counterpart in nothing short of the words of our Lord when he said : "Ye, therefore, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matt.* 5:48). For while the ethical content of the latter may exceed that of the former, both alike set

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before mankind the same majestic goal—God. Even the Levitical command required something more than ritual. It taught both a relation and a duty. It implied that if Israel became holy their holiness would be in some sense a reflection of the holiness of Jehovah. It meant more than simply “you must be mine because I am yours.” On the contrary, it set holiness before the world as the goal of the true spiritual religion. It bade men to imitate what is most characteristic and fundamental in the true God—namely, his supreme and absolute moral excellence. It is this which furnished the ground for the divine commands against idolatry and sorcery and all other species of sin; it was the basis of all moral obligation—“the maxim,” as Principal Fairbairn in his masterly work⁸ has expressed it, “on which Israel’s worship was founded.” In short, this passage is the most remarkable, the most comprehensive, varied, and important epitome of the whole Law to be found anywhere.

Here is a summary of what is probably included in it when thoroughly exegeted, but by no means completely exhausted:

Be ye separate as I am; be ye free from all moral evil; be ye clean and pure; be ye sinless; be ye self-consistent; be ye worthy of honor as I

⁸ *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 251.

am ; have completeness of life as I have ; have energy of will ; ever will to be pure, as I do ; be active, ever manifesting an outgoing energy ; be hallowed in person as I am ; be Godlike, like God ; be consecrated, in order that God may dwell in his chosen sanctuary and radiate his glory among his people from center to circumference. Thus living a holy and separate life, you will daily manifest the covenant relation in which you stand as a holy people to a holy God.

This, I take it, is what the inspired lawgiver meant when he commanded Israel: "Ye shall be holy ; for I Jehovah am holy." Holiness here wins an ethical sense, as in Numb. 15 : 40, where it is explicitly enjoined to "remember and *do* all my commandments and be holy unto your God."

Thus from the Torah we obtain a double conception of holiness : in part ritual, in part ethical ; in part outward, in part inward ; on one side physical, on the other side spiritual ; Jehovah transcendent over Israel, and at the same time tabernacling among Israel in the sanctuary.

Bennett⁹ has compared "the sacred system of the Pentateuch to a pyramid whose base is a pentagon, the five sides of which are the sacred people, the sacred land, the sacred seasons, the sacred acts, and the sacred objects. From these

⁹ *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 160.

base lines there is in each case a gradation to successively smaller classes, with a corresponding increased sancity, till the pyramid reaches its apex in the central rite of the Day of Atonement, when the most sacred person, the high-priest, went into the most sacred place, on the most sacred day, and performed the most sacred acts of the ritual, namely, the offering of incense before the ark and the sprinkling of blood upon the mercy seat."

The Torah retains many of the antique conceptions current among the early Semites ; nevertheless, in the main, it involved the performance of strictly moral duties. Ritual was deemed necessary in order to educate men up to the point where they could grasp the idea of a spiritual God ; but it was also fraught, as history afterward proved, with great danger ; for as long as ritual requirements were regarded by Israel as of paramount importance, a purely moral conception of religion was impossible. And, strangely enough, the Law recognizes no distinction between the moral and the ceremonial. Holiness as set forth in the Torah is only symbolic in outline. " For a complete conception of it we must wait till in the face of Jesus Christ we see the full glory of God." ¹⁰

3. *In the Prophets.*—In the Prophets we find a

¹⁰ BEET, *Holiness as Understood by the Writers of the Bible* (1886), pp. 21 ff.

much broader, fuller, and more ethical conception of holiness than that taught in the Law; for, though even the prophets did not entirely divest themselves of their primitive Semitic inheritances, yet the Godhead of Jehovah meant much more to them than to their predecessors. From the eighth century onward, Jehovah was holy in the sense of moral goodness: holy because he frowned upon all that was morally base. Ethical righteousness was the supreme teaching of the age. Not that the prophets taught anything new about Jehovah, but rather that, "with history as their lesson-book, they taught many things more clearly."¹¹ Chief among these was *duty*.

To Amos a religious rite which was consistent with the Godhead of other deities was grossly inconsistent with the holiness of Jehovah because he was moral. Israel's wayward conduct was a desecration of Jehovah's holy name. "A man and his father go in unto the same maiden to profane my holy name" (2 : 7). The very name of Jehovah was holy. Israel must also be holy because they belonged to Jehovah as his own peculiar property, for his name had been called over them in token of ownership (9 : 12). In a certain passage Amos represents Jehovah as swearing by his holiness

¹¹ Cf. A. B. DAVIDSON, art. "God," in HASTINGS' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 204.

(4 : 2) ; in another as swearing by himself (literally, "by his soul," *i. e.*, by his essence, 6 : 8) to confirm an oath. Hence, to the prophet Amos holiness is synonymous with divinity, and divinity with truthfulness ; for Jehovah takes an oath to strengthen his affirmation to destroy Israel, his holiness being made the pledge of its validity (*cf.* Ps. 89 : 35).

To Hosea, on the other hand, Jehovah was a God whose justice might rightfully move him to destroy disobedient Israel as Admah and Zeboiim, yet, because he is the "Holy One," he is free from all human revenge, and, being God and not man, he will not waver in his purpose to show mercy unto Israel (11 : 9). For, though he dwells in the midst of a people who sacrifice with prostitutes (4 : 14), and like Judah are unstable with the faithful and "Holy One" (11 : 12), still he himself abides firm, above the passions and weaknesses of men, in his determination to show loving-kindness to Israel. Therefore, moral.

To Micah, Jehovah was a God dwelling solitarily (7 : 14) on high (6 : 6) in the temple of his holiness (1 : 2).

To Habakkuk he was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, the "Holy One" who proves his holiness by his righteousness and cannot allow wickedness to go unpunished either in Israel or on the side of the Chaldeans. "Art thou not from

everlasting, O Jehovah, my God, my Holy One?" We shall not die, but the Chaldeans they shall die. For "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not hold thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he" (1:12, 13; 3:3).

To Ezekiel holiness was more objective; particularly in chaps. 40-48 he teaches a physical conception of holiness conditioned by ritual, and very similar to that found in the "Laws of Holiness" (Lev., chaps. 17-26). In this section of his prophecies he rebukes the priests for having done violence to the Law in that they have profaned holy things, having made no distinction between the holy and the common (42:20; 44:23; *cf.* 22:26). He even speaks of holiness as though it were contagious (44:19; 46:20; *cf.*, on the contrary, Hag. 2:12 ff.). Indeed, he outlines a ritual for the post-exilic community; Jehovah is to have a most holy sanctuary (41:4), with holy chambers (42:13; 44:19); the priests shall wear holy garments (42:14); the people shall eat holy portions (42:13) and offer holy oblations (45:1; 48:18). In short, the former temple service shall be restored.

These last nine chapters of Ezekiel, taken by themselves, might indicate that the prophet was paving the way for a system such as is known to us in the book of Leviticus, but the historical back-

ground to these chapters must not be overlooked. That lies in chaps. 33-37. From these it is evident that it is a people forgiven and sanctified whom the prophet contemplates, and for whom the ritual of chaps. 40-48 is intended. The prophet, therefore, does not find it necessary in these latter chapters to vindicate morality anew, because he feels that morality is assured.¹² It is true that Ezekiel lays great emphasis on the exalted and transcendent character of God; at the same time he describes him as moral, and once at least speaks of him as "the Holy One *in* Israel" (39:7). He even defines how Jehovah sanctifies himself and may be sanctified by others. He sanctifies himself when he reveals himself as he is. On the other hand, men may profane him when they constrain him to act in such a way as to disguise any of his great attributes, such as his power in the eyes of the nation so that they misinterpret him.¹³

To Zechariah ritual requirements are of little or no value. The ceremonial law will be forever abolished, and the distinction between the ceremonially clean and unclean will forever be done away. The most secular things and things having not the remotest connection with worship will be as holy as

¹² Cf. A. B. DAVIDSON, "Ezekiel," *Cambridge Bible*, pp. xxxvii-xlii.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xl.

religious objects formerly were when dedicated to the worship of Jehovah by special consecration. Even upon the bells of the horses in that day shall there be engraven the motto "Holy unto Jehovah." Pots and vessels, heretofore only ceremonially clean, will be accounted holy, and the most common vessels in Jehovah's house shall be like the most sacred bowls before the altar; yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holy unto Jehovah of hosts (14:20, 21). For in the perfected kingdom of God everything without exception will be holy and all things will be equally holy.

To this Malachi adds nothing, except that he rebukes the people of Judah for profaning the holiness of Jehovah which he loveth (2:11).

It is in the book of Isaiah that the ethical import of divine holiness receives fullest expression. Hear the exhortations of the seer as he sounds these notes of warning and encouragement: "Jehovah of hosts, him shall ye sanctify, and let him be your fear and let him be your dread" (8:13). He alone "is exalted in justice and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness" (5:16). And as for Judah, "he that is left in Zion and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy" (4:3), not in the sense merely of relationship, but of moral likeness to God.

The *locus classicus*, however, of the prophet's

writings is found in the majestic account of his inaugural vision. In that account he describes how he heard a choir of seraphs singing the antiphonal trisagion: "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (6:3). Isaiah was startled; not, however, because he saw the all-powerful One, not because he had seen a vision of the dreadful One, but because he perceived for the first time the Holy One, and had awakened in him as never before his own sinfulness. In the presence of Jehovah's holiness he felt his own unholiness; in the presence of God's sublime moral excellence he recognized his own moral deficiency. He, a sinful man, had been confronted with a new and overpowering sense of supreme Godhead. Concentrated in Jehovah, he now recognized all the predicates of true divinity, and in attempting to describe his vision he represents him as thrice קדוש, the full significance of which is very inadequately expressed by the English word "holy." What that word included, to the prophet's mind, can never be exactly known, but it probably embraced all those positive attributes of Jehovah which constitute true divinity and call for the religious emotions of awe, reverence, and adoration.

Foremost of all it meant that Jehovah is the true God, the exalted and majestic One, the really divine One, the Royal Sovereign, whose glory fills

the universe, and the only One whose name is worthy. Duhm, commenting on this passage, parallels holiness with כְּבוֹד, "glory," making them practically synonymous. This cannot be done, however, as holiness points rather to the inner reality of Divinity, whereas glory to its outer appearance. As Cœtinger has aptly expressed it: "Holiness is hidden glory and glory is disclosed holiness." Glory is a mere metaphysical and cosmical description of God, a predicate which carries with it no particular ethical significance; whereas holiness, to Isaiah at least, is an attribute which rendered Jehovah the morally unapproachable One, in whose presence the creature must necessarily be conscious of sin.

How indelibly this vision of Jehovah as the Holy God left its impression upon Isaiah's mind is attested, not only by the character of his preaching, but by the fact that he frequently spoke of Jehovah thereafter as "the Holy One of Israel." This title occurs some thirteen times in chaps. 1-39 (beside the expression "The Holy One" in 5:16 and 10:17), and twelve times in chaps. 40-66 (beside "the Holy One" in 43:15 and "the Lofty One" in 57:15), and elsewhere only six times in the entire Old Testament (Ps. 71:22; 78:41; 89:19; Jer. 1:29; 51:5; Hab. 1:12). Obviously, therefore, it is the echo of the seraphic *sanctus*.

What the full import of the divine appellative to the prophet was is difficult to say. A recent writer speaks of it as a "paradox," meaning that the transcendent God has become God of Israel; another discovers in it "the interpenetration of God's self-maintenance and self-disclosure." It probably included both of these ideas, and more. Exegetically, it means that the God of Israel is the only true God, that he is the majestic and powerful One, incomparable, thoroughly righteous and moral, self-consistent in all his dealings with men, ever manifesting in the universe about us his glory; the God who chose Israel and was served by Israel, who is absolutely transcendent above everything finite, and at the same time so worthy of his essence as a spiritual God that he is the only appropriate object of reverence and worship, and, therefore, holy. With such a view of God, is it marvelous that Isaiah and his disciples became preachers of righteousness and vehemently condemned the sins of their contemporaries? And is it any wonder that more and more, as moral action was felt to derive its value from internal volition, religious holiness, which hitherto consisted mainly in ritual requirements inherited from Mosaism, lost something of its strictly objective character?

4. *In the Kethubim.*—The development of this doctrine in the third division of the Canon, known

as the Kethubim, need not detain us at any great length. As might naturally be expected, through the devotional spirit of the psalmists the external element more and more disappears; and yet the term never becomes purely moral in the Old Testament.

Not infrequently the attribute is applied to God: "Jehovah our God is holy" (Ps. 99:3, 9); "Holy and reverent is his name" (Ps. 111:9). The patriarch Job in his affliction consoles himself with the thought that he has "not denied the words of the Holy One" (Job 6:10). In Ps. 89:35 Jehovah swears by "his holiness" (*cf.* Ps. 60:6; 108:7; Amos 4:2); while in Ps. 98:1 the psalmist sings of Jehovah's "holy arm," implying some vague sense of divinity perhaps (*cf.* Isa. 52:10), and in Ps. 68:35, of God as "terrible out of his holy places."

The same quality is occasionally ascribed to the angels who stand in special relation to God and to his work (*cf.* Ps. 89:5, 7; Job 5:1; 15:15). Only rarely are good men called holy in the poetical books. Once, however, Aaron is denominated "the holy one of Jehovah" (Ps. 106:16). In Ps. 34:9 the exhortation is made, "Fear Jehovah, ye his holy ones," and in Ps. 16:3 the divine satisfaction is thus expressed: "As for the holy ones that are in the earth, they are the excellent in whom is all my delight."

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The deeper ethical character of holiness is much more clearly seen, however, when we consider the psalmist's conditions of entrance into Jehovah's holy presence: "Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" inquires the author of Ps. 15, and the answer is returned:

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
And speaketh truth in his heart;
He that slandereth not with his tongue,
Nor doeth evil to his friend,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor;
In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
But who honoreth them that fear Jehovah;
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not;
He that putteth not out his money to usury,
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
He that doeth these things shall never be moved—

he shall live forever in the hill of thy holiness. A similar inquiry is made in Ps. 24:3, "Who shall stand in his holy place?" and again purely ethical conditions are imposed:

He that hath clean hands and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood,
And hath not sworn deceitfully (vs. 4).

Still further light is thrown upon the spiritual character of holiness by the fifty-first psalm, in which the presence of God's spirit seems to be both

a prerequisite and a corollary of a clean heart: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and take not thy spirit of holiness from me" (vss. 10, 11).

In the remaining books of the Kethubim very little that is new is added to the ideas of holiness already obtained. In Chronicles we read of the "holy ark" (2 Chron. 35:3) and of "the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron. 16:29; 2 Chron. 20:21); in Ezra, of "the holy seed" (9:2; *cf.* Isa. 6:13); in Nehemiah, of "the holy sabbath" (9:14); and in Daniel, of a "holy covenant" (11:28). By the same writer, also, the future people of God are described as "the saints of the Most High" (7:18-27). On the other hand, the language of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 4:8 is the language of a polytheist without any special ethical connotation, expressing only the general notion of divinity.¹⁴ Finally, in the book of Proverbs, as in Hos. 11:12, the plural of majesty, קְדוֹשִׁים, is employed as the name of God. It is usually translated "the Holy," and is used almost as a proper name. The idea of divine holiness, however, has no very definite boundaries in the Old Testament.

5. *In the New Testament.*—Passing to the New Testament, the old Hebrew conception is taken up and developed. But the ancient heathen word,

¹⁴ *Cf.* DRIVER, "Daniel," *Cambridge Bible*, p. 48.

ἱερός in Greek, which expressed relationship only, without consideration of inherent quality, was passed, by both the writers of the New Testament and the translators of the Old, and a comparatively new word, *ἅγιος*, was chosen to convey more exactly the notion of the Hebrew קדוש. Etymologically, *ἅγιος* means separation from sin and association with or consecration to the gods. In New Testament usage it became a qualitative and ethical term referring chiefly to character and implying essentially Godlikeness or completeness of life.

One naturally expects to find a long step taken by the New Testament writers in the development of the doctrine, but, as a matter of fact, they only bring out a little more explicitly its ethical aspects and deepen by a few degrees its moral significance. As an idea, it is more characteristic of Old than of New Testament thought. Only the "woof" of the doctrine is new; the "warp" is old. For example, Jerusalem is still "the holy city" (Matt. 4:5; 27:53); the temple is still "the holy place" (Matt. 24:15; Acts 6:13; 21:28); the firstborn is still considered holy unto the Lord (Luke 2:23); John the Baptist is feared by Herod Antipas because he is "a righteous and holy man" (Mark 6:20). The expression "the Holy Spirit" takes the place of the Old Testament phrase "Spirit of Holiness" (Luke 10:21). He it is who reveals the good-

ness of God and makes men holy ; hence, to resist the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin, because it is hatred of goodness (Matt. 12:31, 32 ; Mark 3:29 ; 1 John 5:16, 17 ; Heb. 10:26). Even the divine mercy finds its limitation here, because hatred of goodness forbids all possibility of forgiveness.

The seventeenth chapter of John is also instructive on this theme. Jesus there addresses his Father as "holy" (vs. 11), and in a subsequent verse as "righteous" (vs. 25), both of which seem to be intended to express God's moral self-consistency in not passing the same judgment upon his Son's disciples which he pronounces upon "the world." Again in Rev. 4:8 the apostle declares, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty," who alone is worthy of all praise and honor because of his supreme and absolute moral perfection, "For thou alone art worthy" (15:4).

The apostles and prophets are designated as holy (*cf.* Acts 3:21 ; 2 Pet. 1:21 ; Eph. 3:5) ; likewise Christians in general (1 Cor. 1:2). In 1 Pet. 1:15 f., the old Levitical exhortation reappears: "As he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living : because it is written : Ye shall be holy as I am holy." But Peter reiterates it with the additional force of an imperative which refers to manifestation as well as

to essence ; that is, "show yourselves to be holy as indeed you really are, and so manifest to the world your spiritual standing with God."¹⁵ There is nothing ascetic in Peter's language. Neither the Old Testament nor the New knows anything of asceticism, monasticism, or celibacy as a condition precedent to holiness. Even the guilds known as the "Sons of the Prophets" in Samuel's day were cenobites, not celibates (*cf.* 2 Kings 4 : 1). To the modern oriental type of holiness, the holiness of cloistered seclusion and silence, such as that of the Carthusian and the Trappist, the New Testament in particular gives no encouragement. Alas, that such a conception of holiness should continue to haunt man's imagination!¹⁶

It is in the person and life of Jesus Christ that we behold the true ideal. Before his advent he was announced as "the holy thing" (Luke 1:35); when he preached, men and even spirits recognized him as "the Holy one of God" (John 6:69; Mark 1:24); after his resurrection and ascension he is spoken of as "the holy and righteous One" and as "God's holy servant" (Acts 3:14; 4:30). Concerning himself he openly declared that the Father had sanctified and sent him into the world

¹⁵ *Cf.* BARTLETT, art. "Sanctification," HASTINGS' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. IV, p. 394.

¹⁶ Alas, that הָרֵם should have supplanted קֹדֶשׁ!

(John 10:36; 17:18, 19); while Paul verifies the declaration of prophecy that he is "the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:4).

The proofs of his unique and holy life are everywhere abundant. He emphatically declared that it was his meat to do the will of Him that sent him (John 4:34); that he came down from heaven not to do his own will (6:38); and that he glorified his Father while here upon the earth, having finished the work which he gave him to do (17:4). Thus in Jesus we see the perfectly holy life—a life lived in the flesh and yet so consecrated to his Father that God's will was its one and only aim. Jesus was holy because his purposes were holy; and, his purposes being holy, he dedicated his whole strength, powers, life, to the accomplishment, not of his own, but of his Father's, work. For, as the apostle reminds us, "Christ pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:3). Thus the consummation of holiness is to be found in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

How, then, shall we define holiness? The concept has obviously grown with the development of revelation. It has increased with men's appreciation of the greatness of God's claim upon them. The thunders of Sinai have been exchanged for the

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love of Calvary. Shall we, however, call holiness love? To Paul and John love is apparently its all-inclusive, ethical equivalent. Yet holiness is not love exactly; for love issues only in redemption, whereas holiness issues in both redemption and judgment. Holiness punishes (*cf.* Ezek. 28:22; 36:21, 22). "Holiness is higher than love in that it conditions love." Whatever may be its strict definition when applied to God, it is certainly the most comprehensive predicate of the Godhead, including the ideas of incomparableness, unapproachableness, exclusive adorableness, separation from impurity and sin, absolute perfection of life in an ethical sense, self-affirming purity, and supreme moral excellence. It is the most characteristic and fundamental attribute of God — the ground of moral obligation and the goal of man's religious career; too large and too complex to be comprehended by the human intellect, and yet sufficiently simple to commend itself to all rational and intelligent beings as the supremest ideal of religion and the *summum bonum* for man. There is force in its very vagueness. Among all the qualities that are divine, holiness stands first. With every advance made in knowledge of the true God its significance becomes more profound and its demands upon us more imperative. Holiness is symmetry. Holiness is perfection. Holiness is moral obligation and duty.

6. *Its practical application.*—Before dismissing this great and ennobling theme three thoughts of supreme practical importance should be added:

a) *In order to be holy, it is demanded that one be absolutely devoted to God*—"holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. 7: 34). As Beecher has epigrammatically expressed it: "Holiness is wholeness." And the apostle enjoins: "Like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living" (1 Pet. 1: 15). As Jesus sanctified himself, so must we ourselves; as he separated himself from the common and sordid interests of life, so must we; as he devoted himself unreservedly to the one purpose of doing the Father's will, so must we. For that man alone is holy who dedicates himself entirely to God, who regards himself as belonging to God, and who employs all his time and opportunities to work out the purposes of God. In the Old Testament times, in order to teach men that God claimed them, it was necessary to set apart for himself certain men and places, specific things and seasons, and in due time Israel learned something of the idea of holiness; but when Christ came, he taught that this idea must be realized in every man and every place and thing and time. But especially "the man whom Jehovah doth choose he shall be holy" (Numb. 16: 7).

b) The second thought of supreme importance is that holy consecration to God implies complete victory over sin. For sin always tends to frustrate the purposes of God. There can be no complete devotion to God without complete victory over the inward tendency to evil within us. I am not now speaking of perfect sanctification. For there is a difference between holiness and sanctification. Holiness is an attitude; sanctification, a state. Holiness denotes the purpose of him who has voluntarily determined to make God's ends his ends; sanctification is the character obtained through the execution of that purpose. Holiness is a lifelong series of upright decisions; sanctification is an ever-increasing increment of spiritual capital and power. The apostle Paul was *holy* when he wrote to the Philippian brethren: "This one thing I do" (3:13); he was in a high degree *sanctified* when he declared to Timothy: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4: 7).

But what we wish most to emphasize is this: One cannot be said to be holy so long as he is still *willing* to commit sin. The Bible is a unit on that point. In the Levitical law there is no atonement provided for sins committed willfully. Over and over again it is rehearsed that it is the soul that sins "through ignorance" for whom the sin-

offering is provided in the ritual (*cf.* Lev. 4: 2, 22, 27; 5: 15-18); whereas sins that are committed "with a high hand," that is, in deliberate defiance to God's will, remain not only unforgiven, but "that soul shall utterly be cut off: his iniquity shall be upon him" (Numb. 15: 30, 31). John likewise tells us very plainly that "whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God" (1 John 3:9).

Accordingly, to be holy one must be careful not to commit sin willingly. For holiness is conditioned upon forsaking sin and loving righteousness. "Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy" (Lev. 11: 14; 1 Thess. 4: 3).

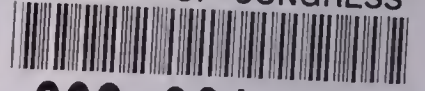
c) The third thought is that the holy life is the ideal life. If holiness includes all that we have above found to be contained in it of separation, and sinlessness, and freedom from evil, and cleanness, and purity, and self-consistency, and completeness of life, and of nearness to God, and Godlikeness, then I ask, in all earnestness and solemnity: How infinitely superior is a holy life to any other that can be lived? Holiness is an ideal that can be pursued at all times. It is the source of every kind of human excellence. It brings joy and cheer to the soul. It also satisfies the intelligence;

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for, as John Bascom¹⁷ says, "Complete knowledge includes complete holiness." It makes God's glory our chief end. It sets before us God's great world-plan to save lost men, making it our plan. It kindles enthusiasm. It fits a man to live. It makes men not only right with God, but right also with one another. In short, true religion is holiness.

¹⁷*Philosophy of Religion*, p. 95.

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